

History of Scott County, Iowa. Chapter VIII: Winfield or Long Grove Township

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 1(6) (Apr. 1864): 248-253

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day the city of Princeton will be one of the most flourishing towns upon the Mississippi river. It has the material in and around it, and its enterprising inhabitants will allow no opportunity to pass unimproved that will tend to advance the interests of their thriving and beautiful city.

CHAPTER VIII.

WINFIELD OR LONG GROVE TOWNSHIP.

This grove of timber of considerable extent, lies between Walnut, or Pease's Grove, and Allen's Grove. It is about twelve miles from Davenport and five miles from the Wabesipinicon river. There are some of the best farms around this grove of any in the county or the State. The face of the country is gently rolling, the soil of the richest quality, and the beautifully cultivated fields, sloping away from the grove on every side, present one of the most interesting agricultural scenes in the Western country.

The settlement was begun in the Autumn of 1837, by John C. and William Quinn, Joseph and James Quinn, George Daily, Alphonso Warren and Aaron Norris, with their families, from Ohio. The Quinns first settled on the banks of the Wabesipinicon river, established a ferry, and subsequently laid out a town called Point Pleasant. The following year, 1838, Charles Elder and family, from Pennsylvania, Elihu Alvord, from New York, H. H. Pease, from Indiana, Alexander and James Brownlie, from Scotland, with families, settled in the grove, and the little band of hardy pioneers began their life in earnest upon the new and fertile soil of Iowa.

Nowhere in all the West do I remember of having witnessed such a beginning as was exhibited in this little colony. There seemed to be more of the faith of the Puritan Fathers among the emigrants than any that I had ever witnessed. All seemed to feel an entire dependence upon one another and on the ruling hand of Providence. One common interest seemed

to cement them all, and a spirit of brotherly love prevailed throughout the settlement.

In the Spring of 1839, several other families arrived, and the want of christian fellowship and teachings was so apparent that Alexander and James Brownlie commenced a Sabbath School in their own log cabin, which has been kept up to the present time. All attended, parents and children. The New Testament was the only book taught except the spelling book, and the plain interpretation and meaning of the lessons read was impressed upon the minds of all. Many now live who can testify to the blessed influences and early impressions gathered at this primitive Sabbath School. A part of the Sabbath was devoted to regular preaching. Christian worship was maintained by James Brownlie, assisted by his brother Alexander, John Quinn and others. From these feeble efforts, the germ planted in faith, has sprung up a Christian Church at Long Grove that has been maintained with growing interest to the present day; and every Sabbath, as its consecrated hours roll round, finds the people of this rich, thriving, moral and christian neighborhood sitting under the teachings of those who, at an early day, spake to them of Christ, the Savior.

There is in this township, between the high ridge of land upon which Long Grove is situated and the Wabesipinicon river, a strip of land some two miles wide of sandy soil, and although not as rich and fertile as other prairie, yet it has been settled up within a few years by an Irish colony, mostly from Canada, of the Roman Catholic faith. They have a small church erected and service performed at stated seasons by a priest from Davenport. There are but few farms along the immediate banks of the Wabesipinicon, it being subject to annual overflow, and generally skirted with timber.

In a letter from Alexander Brownlie, Esq., who has kindly furnished me with many interesting facts connected with the early history of the settlement at Long Grove, he says: "In 1838, flour was worth at the Grove eleven dollars per barrel; cornmeal one dollar per bushel, and pork fifteen cents per

pound. Seed wheat one dollar, and potatoes fifty cents. That it required four bushels of wheat to get a pound of tea. A good cat was worth a pound of tea." To show the value of a cat in those days, says Mr. Brownlie, "I traveled from Long Grove to the residence of a Mr. Ridgeway, some distance above Davenport (about fourteen miles), to obtain a cat which was given me by special favor; Mrs. Ridgeway having first folded the precious animal to her bosom, shed tears at parting, and kissed the little domestic comfort before she could part with such an important treasure."

Mills were scarce in Iowa at that day, and many families lived on hominy and cornmeal ground in a coffee mill. The nearest mill was at Pleasant Valley, and another at the mouth of Pine Creek, Muscatine Co.

In 1840 George Daily built a small grist mill on the little creek north of Walnut Grove. It was the product of his own labor, except stones, which were cut out of a prairie boulder and finished up for running by Alex. Brownlie, who was a stone mason. Mr. Daily, who was an honest, hard working man, ground for many years all the grain for the neighborhood, and made very good flour, although it took him some time to do it, upon his rude and primitive mill. He was called the *honest miller*. The old mill has gone to decay, and the builder removed to other parts.

Elihu Alvord, Esq., was from the State of New York. He is still living with his children near Davenport, and although the oldest pioneer in the county—now eighty-three years of age—he enjoys uncommon good health, is full of life and vivacity, and is happy in his old age to behold the change from the days of his first settlement to the present times.

It was about the last of August, 1838, that Alexander and James Brownlie built their cabins of logs and boards in the east end of the grove, in a cluster of large trees, that sheltered them from the bleak prairie winds. They afterwards sawed lumber by hand, with a whip-saw, rolling the logs upon a platform, and one standing beneath. In this way, they not only supplied themselves with lumber, but furnished much for their

neighbors. Lumber then was worth some forty dollars in Davenport, and not as good as that produced by the Brownlies, and what now could be had for ten dollars per thousand. We can well remember the solid comfort one found in their first cabin. It was the only place, for a long time, between Davenport and Point Pleasant, on the Wabesipinicon, that the traveler could find feed for his horse or food for himself, and he never was turned away cold or hungry, nor had he ever any reason to complain of high charges or want of attention. The traveler was ever welcome, and although no designs or pretensions were made to keep a public house, yet none knew better, or were more willing to add to the comforts of all, than Mrs. Brownlie. The first stage road, and, for some time, the only road to De Witt from Davenport, passed through this grove. The Messrs. Quinn, at a later day, opened farms on the prairie west of the grove, where most of them still reside. James Quinn was elected the present year (1859) to the House of Representatives, on the Republican ticket, and is a man competent and well worthy to fill the honorable station to which he has been elected.

The Brownlies still hold their original possessions, with their lands under the best of cultivation. The old log cabins have given place to beautiful dwellings, surrounded by choice fruit trees and gardens, and the Messrs. B. are considered among the neatest, most judicious and prosperous farmers in Scott county. Hugh M. Thomson also settled in this grove at a later day, and is said to be not only a good farmer, but scientific in his operations, and pays great attention to improvements in agriculture and the breeding of good stock. There are many others in and around this grove, both of the old and new settlers, well deserving of notice, and who have done much towards the progress of agriculture in that settlement. In the early days of this colony, there seemed to have been planted as a basis, good, sound, moral and religious principles, and they have been maintained to the present time.

In those days, men were *expected* to be honest, and *were honest*. "No one thought then of locking doors," says Mr. Brownlie. The Post Office was at Point Pleasant, and John

Quinn P. M. He was often from home and the office left open for all to wait on themselves. The whole neighborhood would take their letters to mail, and leaving them, would get their mail matter, leaving the postage on the letter box, or accounting afterwards for the same, none desiring to cheat the Post Master. Everybody was poor alike and needed friends, and was always friendly. There was none of that grasping, selfish disposition exhibited in many of the early settlements of our country, and consequently but little quarreling about *claims* or anything else. There was room for *all*, and the Long Grove settlement was a pattern of excellence, in its early struggle, and nobly did it succeed. It stands to-day among the most enterprising, moral and religious communities in our county or our State.

A span of horses and wagon in those days were hired at five dollars per day. The Brownlies owned the first wagon and the first fanning mill in or about the settlement, which was used in common by the whole community for many years. "In the Autumn of 1838," says Mr. Brownlie, "when the first snow fell, our oxen strayed away, and early the next morning I started on their track, following them across the uninhabited prairie towards the Mississippi river, and came up with them in Pleasant Valley about dark, without any money with me or acquaintance in that neighborhood. I applied for shelter and food of a true pioneer, who has often fed the hungry and made glad the heart of the distressed immigrant by his cheerful and lively disposition, and above all, his free and generous heart." It was the rude shanty of Capt. Isaac Hawley, then just settled, and who still lives to enjoy the heartfelt gratitude of many of the pioneers of Scott county, who have so often shared his generous and kindly greeting. The Captain not only gave him the hospitalities of the night, but supplied him, unsolicited, with money he might need on his return. How sweet are the remembrances of such acts of kindness, as we look back upon the scenes of our early life in the West!

The Long Grove settlement has now become large and populous. The little log church, erected in the days of weakness

and poverty, still stands upon the beautiful rise of ground on the east side of the grove, and is used for a school house, while just beside it stands their new and elegant church building, erected the present season. Long may they enjoy the rewards of their early toil they so richly deserve.

CHAPTER IX.

BLUE GRASS TOWNSHIP.

Blue Grass, or "Blue Grass Point," as it was first called by the white settlers, received its name from a point of timberland that extended into the prairie near the Muscatine county line. It was a great camping-place of the Indians in their travels from the trading-post on Rock Island to their hunting grounds upon the Cedar, Iowa and Des Moines rivers. It is a noted fact, that wherever the Indian has been in the habit of camping, *blue grass* was sure to follow. Hence the name of "Blue Grass" was early given to this point from the abundance of that kind of grass found there.

This township or precinct consists of but one regular township of land (township seventy-eight, north range two east), six miles square, but the town or village of Blue Grass is situated directly on the southern boundary of the township, and the settlement of this place belongs as much to Buffalo township as to Blue Grass, when strictly bounded by township lines; but we speak of the *early* and *present* settlement, without regard to lines. The village is located in the south-west corner of the township, on the State Road leading from Davenport to Muscatine, it being ten miles from the former and eighteen miles from the latter place, and about four miles from the Mississippi river. The township is nearly all prairie; but its southern boundary, running along its entire length, near the timber of Buffalo township, has been supplied with ample material for farming and building purposes.

The settlement first began at this point, we believe, in 1836, by a Mr. Sprague, Mr. Sry and perhaps one or two more; but

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